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Reclaiming languages, decolonizing knowledge(s): Articulating Indigenous knowledge(s) in and for language reclamation

Prepared in partnership with
Language Attitude

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Abstract

Indigenous scholars have long been calling for the integration of Indigenous ways of teaching and learning in education (e.g. Kawagley, 2005; Simpson, 2002), showing that placing Indigenous philosophies at the center of curriculum makes education more relevant to students and helps ameliorate persistent educational inequalities (Brayboy et al., 2015; McCarty & Lee, 2015). Language is an active and living repository of Indigenous philosophies and world views, vital for maintaining Indigenous knowledge systems (McCarty & Lee, 2015).
This research project seeks to learn from Indigenous language and culture reclamation efforts and initiatives that aim to center Indigeneity to reclaim what has been or could be lost. Through a review of community-based and community-driven Indigenous education programs in the U.S. and around the world, this research project explores the knowledges and pedagogies that drive these efforts, specifically, how Indigenous knowledge systems are being articulated within language reclamation movements.
The knowledge gained through this investigation will help support the youth-led development of *Bòg!*, an interactive game that centers students' home languages and knowledge systems through storytelling. The goal is to bring this work to schools and other organizations in Minnesota that work with linguistically diverse youth to reclaim their culture and native languages.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge systems, language reclamation, Indigenous youth, storytelling, arts, culture revival

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Acknowledgements

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About Language Attitude

Language Attitude is a highly mobile hub of multilingual and multicultural indigenous artists, elders and scientists working to promote and protect culture and language. We honor indigenous way of life through our traveling exhibit by creating a unique collection of artwork allowing communities to experience up-close the remaking of culture. Language Attitude designs interactive programs that propel communities into an exploration of the culture or art and the language of art.

Introduction - *Bòg*

It is late during a summer evening and a group of nine people are sitting in a circle with cards lying in the middle of a table. One person is standing up as others watch. She is moving her arms as if rowing a canoe, then gets to the ground and off the canoe, carrying what seems like a very heavy bag over her head. She sits around a fire, where she warms up her hands and tells stories, with other people, in another place and time. We are a group of friends from different places around the world, speakers of multiple languages and holders of multiple knowledges who came together this evening to play *Bòg*, a game developed by Veronica Quillien, founder of Language Attitude. Veronica's work focuses on her own embodied reclamation of Bàsàa, her ancestral language, but also engages much further, in actively thinking about ways to foster new and deeper relationships and inter-generational connections, to create community, reclaim languages and re-make culture.

Within our group of friends, the game allows us to share stories we would otherwise not have the opportunity to share, to learn about our heritage, and travel to distant places, while creating new connections in a stronger social web. The experience will be different every time the game is played. Among families and communities, children will learn from their elders and elders learn and will be inspired by the youth. Youth might hear stories passed down through generations, or create new stories to be shared. Throughout these processes, knowledge is also created and passed down, multiple languages might be heard, transmitted, maybe even creating sparks that will turn into new generations of speakers and carriers of ancestral knowledge. Among diverse groups of youth, the game might allow for that cross-sharing of experiences and traditional knowledge, learning about each other, validating our stories, our languages, our cultures and opening up possibilities for working collaboratively to validate and reclaim Indigenous languages and ways of knowing.

One year after it was first conceived, *Bòg* has been played among families, friends, workspaces, in universities, museums and community organizations. Seeing the overwhelmingly positive response, Language Attitude, in partnership with the International Council of Indigenous Youth (ICIY) is considering ways to further develop the game and bring it to schools as part of a curriculum that centers and seeks to revitalize students' home languages and funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2006).

Staying true to Indigenous methodologies (Smith, 1999), Language Attitude recognizes the need to ground the game and the processes driving its development and implementation in Indigenous ways of knowing. Scholars in the field of Indigenous education have found that language and culture programs that incorporate and/or are based on Indigenous philosophies and pedagogies are more relevant to students and community, see more family and community involvement, ameliorate persistent educational inequalities and enhance cultural identity (Brayboy et al., 2015; McCarty & Lee, 2015).

This project originated as a desire from Language Attitude's board of directors to learn from community-based and community-driven education and language reclamation programs rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing, to inform and support the development and implementation of the game as an interactive curriculum for language and culture reclamation. Through a review of language and culture revitalization programs that have been considered successful in the U.S. and around the globe, this report explores the philosophies and pedagogies that drive these efforts, specifically asking:

1. How are Indigenous knowledge systems being articulated within language reclamation movements?
2. What can Language Attitude learn from these initiatives?

We find that language reclamation needs to be engaged through local practices, uncovering and re-creating local knowledges. Throughout the movements explored here, language, culture and knowledge-making are intertwined processes that encompass land, spirituality, relationality, and a collective responsibility that emerges from the roots up.

Bòg can be played in any setting and with any group of people, and each time the experience will be different, opening up possibilities and spaces for youth to reclaim their languages and to re-create culture. But *Bòg* is only the medium for what may grow into a long journey. Above all, there is a need of constant reflection and a collective responsibility to share the knowledge and engage in the work of language and culture reclamation.

This report starts with some beginning thoughts on categories and definitions, followed by a description of the philosophy behind *Bòg* and the importance of rooting language reclamation in Indigenous epistemologies (ways of knowing). We then continue with a description of specific language education efforts and language reclamation movements from early education to higher education. Finally, we discuss the takeaways of this analysis and detail the next steps in the work towards the development of Bog for language and culture reclamation.

Some beginning thoughts and considerations

Before we get too far in this report, it is important to clarify some definitions. This report follows Leonard's (2017) definition of language reclamation as "larger effort by a community to claim its right to speak a language and to set associated goals in response to community needs and perspectives" (p.19), also taking into account the embodied and dynamic nature of language and its inextricable and reciprocal links to human and non-human interaction, Indigenous ways of being, living and knowing.

As we define some terms and leave others undefined, it is important to note that the categories we employ limit our understanding and imagination, erase other understandings and might even reproduce violent relationships. Such is the case with the word 'Indigenous,' which, as Aquino (2013) notes, limits us from seeing the cultural diversity that hides within it. In some places, the term might also refer to "a condition of exploitation, domination and exclusion." Such is the case of Oaxaca, Mexico, where the term "original" is often preferred (Maldonado, 2010). But using the terms "Indigenous" vs. "Western" serves to name that very history of domination. Breidlid defines "Indigenous" from an anti-colonial perspective as a "shared experience of domination," which "originates with, and is perpetuated by their contact with a western hegemonic epistemology" (Breidlid, 2013, p.31). From this perspective, being Indigenous means "experiencing a social, cultural, political and ontological domination by a hegemonic form of western thought and social organization that orients itself toward a particular version of modernity" and "resisting that domination through a self-identification." These understanding seeks transformation and social change through interrogating mainstream epistemologies and offering alternative forms of knowledge, living and being in the world. It also avoids conceptions of "Indigenous" or "Indigenous knowledges" that essentialize and paint an idyllic vision of the

past. Indigenous knowledges are inherently dynamic process that are constantly created and re-created within modernity (see e.g. Guerrero Osorio, 2013).

Perhaps the greatest challenge to Western conceptions of "knowledge," is that "spirituality features prominently in the concept of indigenous knowledges" (Breidlid & Botha, 2015, p.321). Knowledge, "ultimately originates in the spirit world, and it is controlled in very specific and intricate ways in Aboriginal lifeways. The process of learning, or of gaining new knowledge is focused around learning more about oneself in relation to the land, the spirits and all of our relations" (Simpson, 2001, p.142).

Finally, it is important to recognize the impossibility of translation from lived experience, from oral traditions, relationships and interactions, from Bàsàa, Quechua or Ojibwe into English and the written page. Once knowledge is removed from context and from the people, and through the process of documenting, integrating and interpreting, there is a danger that knowledge becomes assimilated, commodified, and used to support the status quo (Simpson, 2001).

The descriptions and interpretations presented here are necessarily limited, reduced, molded into abstract concepts and categories, contradictory to their very nature (Esteva, 2016). Yet acknowledging these limitations, we believe that outlining the efforts of Indigenous people and communities who have turned to Indigenous knowledges to guide language reclamation processes represents a counter-hegemonic political act. This report is an invitation to venture (in and) out of logical understanding, call our intuitions into senti(feeling)pensar(thinking) different ways of thinking and being in the world (Esteva, 2016), so that from these efforts, other efforts can gain inspiration to create new and innovative language reclamation movements in schools and/or communities. With that in mind, let us turn back to *Bòg*.

Bòg is the root of Mbòg: The philosophy behind the game

"I developed the game Bòg to keep my ancestors' language and culture alive. Though many of the game's elements are rooted in Bàsàa culture, it is designed to be a tool for anyone to use to explore and talk about their ancestors' culture together" (Likinè, 2018).

[Picture of the deck of cards]

Bòg is the root of the word *Mbòg*, and the root of Bàsàa philosophy, meaning "to fix what has been disturbed to maintain social order" (Bot Ba Njock, 1970; Wonyu, 2007). It is an inherent process of decolonization, refusing "the forceful assimilation to western paradigms (Are, 2013)" (Quillien, 2019) while creating spaces for social transformation.

Mbòg represents the social knowledge and the social history of the Bàsàa people of Cameroon. In the words of Veronica Quillien, it is, "like the oral testament of our ancestors, a temporal link between generations" (Quillien, 2018). Language reclamation is thus a process of reclaiming Mbòg, from the story of migration of the Bàsàa people, to all the knowledge transmitted from generation to generation through language, storytelling and cultural symbols. Language learning is a process of learning about oneself "in relation to the land, the spirits and all of our relations," (Simpson, 2001). For Quillien (2019), learning the language with her father, represents a spiritual journey in finding her inner power and learning to interact with and express Mbòg.

As the son of a guardian of tradition, Quillien's father speaks Mbòg in a particular way that reflects his knowledge and position. This is reflected, for example, though his use of ceremonial language. But Mbòg can be accessed through different pathways and can be spoken differently based on the individual's circumstances, interests and strengths. As Quillien was re-learning to express Mbòg through her reclamation process, she asked, how we can look at Mbòg through language and culture, combining language and cultural symbols through different artistic expressions.

She collaboratively created the card game *Bóg,* (Likinè, Ño Lep, Quillien & Vang, 2018) and a graphic novel, *Reclaiming Roots* (Likinè, Ño Lep, Nyunai Ngan & B. G., 2018) to incentivize others to engage in intergenerational sharing and storytelling. Both of these creative processes and artistic artifacts combine language and symbols, such as the spider in the cover of the card game, symbol of protection for the Bàsàa. According to oral tradition,

> *the Bàsàa people of Cameroon originated from the town of Meroe in ancient Egypt. In the 11th and 12th centuries, they migrated from the East to escape conflict, and found refuge in current day Cameroon, in what is now Ngog Lituba, the pierced rock. Ngog Lituba is where Mban, the ancestor of the Bàsàa people of Cameroon, and his family hid from invaders. After they entered the rock, a spider wove a nest that sealed the hole and protected them. When the invaders arrived at Ngog Lituba, they were no longer able to track the family. That is how Mban and his family escaped the invaders. As a result, the spider is a symbol of protection for the Bàsàa people of Cameroon and Ngog Lituba is a sacred site.* (Likinè, 2018)

Messages are encoded not only through language, but also through symbols. According to Quillien, symbols "have a very specific way of engaging with you." Reclaiming Mbòg means finding different ways of engaging with symbols, learning meanings, but also learning to recognize and create new meanings: "It's spirituality in a way, because I don't know it and I'm trying to understand it. The only way for me to understand it is to read and interpret another meaning." "Once you find your inner power," she finds, "it's easy to interact with Mbòg. It's one way for us [who did not grow up with Mbòg] to reclaim Mbòg" (2018).

Mbòg is mind and body, a way of life and of relating to one another. It is composed of three components, inner power, social knowledge and protection or creativity (Quillien, 2019). Inner power relates to the personal journey of the individual in how they choose to express Mbòg within the collective, expressed through social knowledge, that is, through learning and relationships with elders and others in the community. Finally, protection means thinking about creative ways to protect, sustain and reclaim Mbòg.

As part of her journey reclaiming her Bàsàa language, Quillien co-started a summer language camp in Cameroon with the purpose of creating awareness about language loss in the Bàsàa community and to build capacity to protect Mbòg through engaging youth in keeping intergenerational transmission alive (Likinè, 2018). Quillien explains how "we can only get [access to the language] and understand [the language] by talking to elders," and it is through elders that youth have access to the knowledge. By engaging in storytelling and a multitude of local arts-based and youth-led activities, participants explore and engage Mbòg (2018). The projects and performances that students plan for the last day of the camp take place in Bàsàa. Participants go back to their families each day, ask questions and talk about their projects with their families. It is by having those conversations that they learn about themselves, find their

inner power and creative ways to engage and protect Mbòg. Youth are then not only learning language and culture. They become makers of culture, creating new symbols with the support of elders and artists.

Language learning through this process comes through the interaction with elders when working to reclaim Mbòg. The language is not necessarily the focus, or the center of this effort, but it is the way into Mbòg. Youth learn the vocabulary through games or other activities, they prepare to talk to their relatives and ask questions. The language is thereby reinforced the parents start to speak the language in everyday interaction, restoring intergenerational transmission.

Using *Mbòg,* a Bàsàa paradigm to locate relationality, spirituality and storytelling to reclaim the Bàsàa language represents a decolonizing move (Smith, 1999), but despite this being a response to and a refusal to forceful assimilation (Are, 2013), Mbòg must always be spoken from a positive perspective. Language reclamation has to come from a sense of purpose and responsibility. “What it means to be Bàsàa is basically teaching,” she explains, “it comes back to the word and speaking Mbòg. It’s about sharing the knowledge that you have been given. You don’t keep it, you share it. If you don’t share it you are disturbing the social order. That’s what Mbòg means to me, that’s what speaking Mbòg means to me, and then I have that responsibility to make sure that the knowledge gets passed down to the next generation” (Quillien, 2018).

Language reclamation through Indigenous epistemologies (ways of knowing)

BògIs part of a broader effort of language and culture reclamation, envisioned to create awareness and action, responding to a growing generational shift from Indigenous and other minoritized languages to colonial languages and Western ways of knowing. In this section we will describe the connections between language and knowledge systems, and the importance of

grounding language reclamation programs and curriculum in Indigenous epistemologies (ways of knowing).

Language is connected to culture in the same way as linguicide has been connected to epistemicide (Mignolo, 2002), in that the processes of oppression and exploitation that have suppressed, invisibilized and eradicated Indigenous knowledge systems have also worked to displace and eradicate Indigenous languages (de Sousa, 2009).

This long and ongoing history of exploitation, and the intricate, interconnected relationship of language and knowledge construction means that language reclamation is never only about the language. It is a decolonization effort, a reclamation of language, knowledge(s) and a way of being in the world, inextricably connected to autonomy, self-determination, land rights, and a sense of identity for communities and individuals (Hinton, 2001).

Language is vital for maintaining Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural identity (McCarty & Lee, 2015). It embodies everyday knowledge and spiritual knowledge (Simpson, 2002), and is an active and living repository of Indigenous philosophies, world views and processes of teaching, knowing and interacting in the world (Simpson, 2002).

Traditionally, language revitalization as a field of study has focused on linguistic documentation, orthography development and acquisition planning from top-down approaches and Western perspectives, which instead of strengthening, might serve to weaken Indigenous identities, languages, and intellectual traditions (Romero Little, 2006). In recent years, however, there has been an important realization within the field that successful language revitalization movements need to emerge from the ground up, rather than being imposed by policies or outside researchers and organizations. This has led to a growing number of scholars and activists

advocating for and engaging in community based language revitalization efforts (McCarty, 2018).

Indigenous scholars have long been advocating for and actively constructing their own paradigms rooted on Indigenous epistemologies and social justice (Breidlid & Botha, 2015; Kawagley, 1995; Wane, 2008), calling for the integration of language and culture (e.g. Hermes, 2007), Indigenous intellectual traditions and language and literacy development (e.g. Romero-Little, 2006), and Indigenous ways of teaching and learning in education (e.g. Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Simpson, 2002).

Centering Indigenous philosophies in education makes programs more relevant to students, helps ameliorate persistent educational inequalities, and increases family and community involvement (Brayboy et al., 2015; McCarty & Lee, 2015). Demmert and Towner (2003), for example, found that comprehensive, culturally-based education programs that include a strong language component positively correlate with improved social, cultural and academic development of students. These programs follow pedagogies that resemble McCarty and Lee's (2014) critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy, in that they seek to center Indigenous education sovereignty to challenge asymmetrical power relations while revitalizing what has been or could be lost.

Indigenous education comes "from the roots up". "It comes from being enveloped by land," (Simpson, 2017, p.154) and all the intimate relationships of the individual with the spiritual and physical world. The practice of living and the construction of knowledge are intertwined, knowledge and theory being generated through relations with the Land as mother and territory (Simpson, 2017; Diaz, 2007). As Simpson writes, "doing produces more knowledge." It is the act of doing that "animates theory within Indigenous contexts, and it is the

crucial intellectual mode for generating knowledge. Theory and praxis, story and practice are interdependent, cogenerators of knowledge" (p.20).

The act of engaging language and culture reclamation thus generates knowledge. It is through doing, through speaking, listening, through storytelling, observing elders, being in relations and pitching in (Bang et al., 2015), that we are engaging in transformation. As Simpson (2017) puts it, "if we want to create a different future, we need to live a different present, so that present can fully marinate, influence and create different futurities. If we want to live in a different present, we have to center Indigeneity and allow it to change us" (p.20).

Bòg is one example of engaging in language and culture reclamation by centering Indigeneity through storytelling and turning attention to the web of physical and spiritual relationships we hold and re-create. It fits within broader movements of language reclamation, efforts and programs that are centering Indigeneity and thereby transforming the present. Let us now turn to some of these examples.

Making, creating, theorizing language reclamation

Countless people and communities are engaged in language and culture reclamation every day. This review can only access those accounts that have been published. The available literature was a limitation and determinant of inclusion here, but nevertheless, there is much important work published and very little space in this report.

Some of the efforts described here have been widely cited and hailed as successful examples in language reclamation (e.g. language nests and other Indigenous language immersion programs in New Zealand and Hawaii (King, 2001; Wilson & Kamanā, 2001)). Others are less known in the English-speaking world, but I have come across in my own work on language

reclamation in Mexico and Latin America (e.g. Amawtaywasi, nd; Briseño, 2015; Maldonado & Maldonado, 2018; Morán, 2013). The purpose here is not to have a comprehensive or extensive literature review or to aim to replicate any of these programs--that would defeat the principles of community-based education--, but rather to learn from other ground-up, Indigenous education initiatives to support the work of Language Attitude and partner organizations and to contribute towards expanding both dialogue and action.

Language nests (early education)

A little boy of about 3 years of age stands at the door of a classroom speaking in Olelo Hawai'i. He is introducing himself by saying his name, where he comes from (son of…) and stating his desire to learn before he asks the teacher for permission to enter (What is Pūnana Leo, n.d.). This boy is a student at a Pūnana Leo, a language nest that offers total immersion in Hawaiian language and culture.

Language nests are some of the first Indigenous language immersion programs to emerge in the early 80s as native leaders and parents saw the urgent need, and the importance of the language being transmitted to the younger generations, starting with very young children. This model of Indigenous early education first emerged in Aotearoa (also known as New Zealand) and was called Kuhanga Reo, literally, "language nest," because it aimed to bring elders, native speakers, together with young children, so they could feed them the language. According to the principles and philosophy of the Kōhanga Reo , Maori culture and ways of knowing are inseparable from the language and thus language immersion education entailed the "imparting of Maori spiritual values and concepts" and the teaching and "utilization of traditional techniques of child care and knowledge acquisition" (May, 1999, p.53). The Kōhanga Reo are also based on Maori principles of collective responsibility, this means that "whānau (parents and extended

family) are the foundation blocks of the Kōhanga Reo movement." They participate as decision makers, in the administration and operation and as volunteers at events and daily activities (Te Kōhanga Reo, n.d.). Whānau are accountable to each other and share the responsibility to provide an "environment that is physically, environmentally and spiritually safe" through Maori values (Te Kōhanga Reo, n.d.).

Along with the Kōhanga Reo in Aotearoa, the Pūnana Leo in Hawaii are one of the longest running and most successful language immersion programs in early education. Inspired by the Kōhanga Reo, the Pūnana Leo are part of a larger Hawaiian renaissance movement that saw several grassroots efforts working to reclaim Hawaiian language and culture. The philosophy of the movement establishes as a primary goal "the continued existence of strengthening of the Hawaiian mauli, or life force, which allows for the continued existence of a Hawaiian people" (Wilson & Kamanā, 2001, p.147). It aims to strengthen mauli through the (re)creation and continuation of communities and spaces that value a common Hawaiian identity, like traditional extended family arrangements, traditional activities and the life experiences of elders. This entailed the designation of Hawaiian-only spaces, and focusing the curriculum on "Hawaiian family experiences, behaviors and values…, actions toward food and animals, spiritual interactions, and the important role of music and dance" (p.151). Much of this learning was already ingrained in the initial teachers, elders who had been raised through Hawaiian values.

The Pūnana Leo are described as "family-based learning environments where the Hawaiian language thrives" (What is Pūnana Leo?, n.d.). Like the Kōhanga Reo , the activism and involvement of parents and the larger extended family is a key characteristic. Inadequate funding in the beginning years of the program led to parent in-kind service which then developed

into the hana makua or "parent participation" component that includes responsibilities such as attending language classes, monthly governance meetings and participation in school activities (ʻAha Pūnana Leo, n.d.).

Despite challenges along the way, language nests in Aotearoa and Hawaii are widely praised as successful in that they have seen the language come forward in younger generations and they have promoted strong, healthy Maori and Hawaiian identities. These programs have grown to include immersion schools that go up to high school and university programs and have also become models for other Indigenous communities around the world (e.g. McIvor, 2005; Meyer, 2018).

Language immersion programs

The Indigenous language-immersion method has been widely recognized as "one of the most effective tools for restoring Indigenous language while simultaneously teaching for Native student academic success" (Hermes, 2007, p.58). A shift from transitional bilingual education and language and culture classes that include culture as curriculum content, immersion education generally means integrating Indigenous ways of learning and knowing as medium of instruction, a complete paradigm shift that also demands a deeper engagement with the local community, including elders, the traditional holders of knowledge. By integrating Indigenous ways of learning and knowing in education, Indigenous immersion can be a powerful tool not just to bring the language back into daily use, but for creating culture (Hermes, 2007). Below are some stories and descriptions of how different immersion schools are articulating Indigenous knowledges within their curriculum to create these transformative spaces.

Starting with children from the language nests, the Maori Immersion program at Rakaumanga school (NZ) started in 1985 and in the 90s expanded to include a secondary school. The school focuses on holistic, integrated learning experiences that refer back to traditional knowledge transmission where children from a very young age participate in community activities and listen to elders in public assemblies. To encourage participation in the community, the school holds camps every year in Waikato-tainui historical places, where students might observe and listen to elders talk about the history of their tribe, and participate in ceremonies and other events. The school also emphasizes participation in community functions, like the Kapa haka (Maori performing arts and chants). The desire, deep from within the community, is for children to learn about themselves and their tribal identity, to hold the knowledge so the knowledge remains when the elders pass (Harrison & Papa, 2005).

The Cree Way project started as a curriculum and material development program and grew to an immersion school with the goal to validate Cree culture and create a Cree tribal identity. The curriculum, created to reflect the Cree conceptual framework, is developed locally by teachers who "train themselves to teach in the Cree Way" (Stiles, 1997, p.250).

Very often, school schedules conflict with the calendars guiding life in the community, inhibiting school-aged children to fully participate in community activities and ceremonies. In order to engage the school within the community and encourage participation, the Cree Way school opted to change the school calendar to be in sync with community events and ceremonies. This meant making time and space in the fall and the spring for hunting and ceremonial programs. Some of the cultural activities supported by the school are trips to the bush camp, where "tribal resource people teach traditional skills in trapping, beading, snowshoe

construction, cooking, and fur tanning. Students write in Cree about the camp in their journals" (p.250).

Many schools encourage participation in community events and ceremonies by integrating them and making these part of the yearly curriculum. At Waadookodaading, an Ojibwe immersion school located in Hayward Wisconsin near the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation, students go to the sugar bush every year in the spring to collect sap to make maple syrup. This event is one that involves interaction among students, teachers and elders, and one that is looked forward to every year. Starting an Indigenous-immersion school represents a paradigm shift in education and it entails great challenges, such as re-conceptualizing how to center Indigenous culture and knowledges through the language. Mary Hermes (2004; 2007) describes the "gut wrenching" initial years, as teachers and parents worked together to create an Ojibwe curriculum from scratch. Like in other immersion schools, parent participation has been an integral part of the school. With 90-100% of parents helping to support staff, the school taps into a big desire to learn, a love of Ojibwe language and a sense of responsibility to reclaim the language and knowledge systems for future generations (Hermes, 2007).

Another example of Indigenous-immersion education, the Hawaiian medium and culture-based charter school Halau Ku Mana (HKM) in Honolulu, places Hawaiian cultural knowledge and practices like navigation, sailing, fishpond restoration and taro cultivation at the heart of the curriculum. One of the school founders, Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2013) cites Kau'i, a former student, describe her experience building a traditional "halau wa'a (a style of house for sheltering canoes as well as people) out of mangrove wood and pili grass" (p.4). Throughout the building process, students at HKM along with teachers and college students had the opportunity to interact with elders, masters of Indigenous knowledge, actively practicing and creating culture.

As Kau'i described it, "you never know when they're going to spill out this knowledge and all this mana. You just gotta be around" (p.4).

The educators at HKM ground their pedagogies and ethical practice on the concept of aloha'āina, "the root of Hawaiian resistance." A political philosophy and praxis, aloha'āina encompasses the relationship to the land, recognizing all beings as part of interrelated, living systems. It also recognizes the connection of humans as part of the land, coming from the land and returning to the land. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua suggests "thinking about aloha'āina as a multiplicity of literacies" that she calls land-centered literacies. These are not limited to human linguistic and social practices and include "Kanaka 'Oiwi practices of reading the stars and other celestial bodies and events; offering chants in our own human language and then observing and finding meaning in the responses of winds, rains, birds, waves, or stones; and writing ourselves into the landscape by drawing water through irrigation ditches to lo'ikalo and then back to streams" (p.34).

The practice of aloha'āina affirms multiple ways of knowing as it recognizes multiple literacies and languages, human and nonhuman. Anyone is invited to participate and practice aloha'āina. "In this sense," Goodyear-Ka'ōpua notes, "the category opens up larger systemic possibilities for change by not limiting these practices to 'Oiwi Hawai'i alone but allowing settlers to take on the ethics and practices of aloha'āina" (p.35).

Community-based schools

Similar to the Indigenous-immersion experiences described above, some Indigenous education efforts have taken a holistic view of education rooted on Indigeneity by centering culture, land and local ways of knowing as medium of education. Not less important, the language

reclamation aspect is enabled through and becomes part of the daily interactions within the community. In Oaxaca, Mexico, these initiatives have been articulated around the concept of "comunalidad."

"Comunalidad," is not an Indigenous word, but, as Floriberto Díaz, an Ayuujk thinker, activist and educator, notes, is the one that "comes closer to what we want to say" (2007, p.38). In his Ayuujk language, the idea of comunalidad is described through two words, *näjx*, (earth/land) and *käjp*, (pueblo), making the interrelationship and interdependence of earth/land and pueblo evident. As he tells us, *näjx* makes the existence of *käjp* possible, while *käjp* gives meaning to *näjx* (2007). The community that Floriberto Díaz refers to is characterized by a web of relationships primarily between people and the environment and then among people themselves. In his community of Santa María Tlahitoltepec in Oaxaca, Floriberto Díaz describes these relationships as manifesting through an underlying force or energy that mediates between people, and people with each element of nature (in Nava, 2013, p.60). He forefronted the spiritual connections with the land as underlying every relationship, including work. In fact, work constitutes one of the main elements of comunalidad, both in relationship with the land, but also the value of donating work for the benefit of the community. Comunalidad is built on a strong social fabric that is weaved through relationships of reciprocity (Maldonado, 2010), starting with the family, extended family and weaved through wider relationships in the community.

Several efforts to transform Indigenous education have emerged in Oaxaca through a strong movement that has articulated comunalidad as a guiding principle (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2018). Comunitaria or communal education aims to be dialogic by combining and

negotiating local forms of knowledge with external, colonizing models of education, yet always rooted in the community (Dietz, 2012).

The first comunal high school, or bachillerato comunitario, (Bachillerato Integral Comunitario Ayuujk Polivalente or BICAP) was the materialization of the ideas of Floriberto Díaz among other Indigenous intellectuals in the small community of Santa Maria Tlahitoltepec (Morán, 2013). The main objectives of the BICAP include strengthening education in the mother tongue and in other languages. This is done through interdisciplinary research that is closely connected to communal, cultural and natural realities and oriented towards the common and communal well-being. An important pedagogical principle in the BICAP and in Ayuujk/Mixe comunal education is that of wejën kajën, the sprouting, awakening of person-people. According to Mixe cosmology, human beings don't create, "they only re-create what has already been created, that means; they construct, invent to transform what is already given by the natural world." Within that construction, "the person-people sprouts, awakens, puts the wejën kajën in motion" (Morán, 2013, n.p.). Learning through wejën kajën is an act that is never finished.

Another program of comunitaria education, the secundarias comunitarias (going from 7th to 9th grade), first appeared in 2004, and there are now 11 of them located in small, remote communities across the state. These schools follow a project and community-based research curriculum where in the first year, students learn research skills and then go out to their communities to apply their knowledge and try to solve real problems. Students use their original language (most students are proficient speakers) to interview elders in the community and to analyze the information gathered. Additionally, their findings are shared bilingually (in the Indigenous language and in Spanish) in community assemblies (asambleas) where everybody is invited and participates in the formative evaluation of the students' work. Through this

pedagogical process, the secundaria comunitaria promotes the use and importance of the local language while also leading students to re-value the local knowledges (Briseño, 2015; Ruiz Lopez & Quiroz Lima, 2014). Many of the projects are published as bilingual texts, and many have an important impact after being presented in the community asambleas. A project on whitetail deer, for instance, resulted in the community banning the hunting of deer, and a second project that reported on the local contamination level, resulted in plastic bags being forbidden in stores and restaurants, inviting people to bring their own baskets (Ruiz Lopez & Quiroz Lima, 2014).

A pedagogy of comunalidad must be necessarily dynamic and adaptable, rooted in a particular place and community. There are however shared characteristics that frame these educational proposals and that distinguish educación comunitaria, such as: 1) The articulation of knowledges around local and regional knowledges, 2) research as the pedagogical axis, 3) the communal philosophy as a horizon, 4) the participation of the community in the learning process, 5) the extensive use of the original language, 6) a curriculum suitable to the reality in which students and the community works, and 7) the collaboration of teachers, who, more than teach, help students learn (Maldonado, 2016, p.48). It is through comunalidad, relationships, through land-based pedagogies, communal work, participation through asamblea (assemblies), rites and ceremonies that the original language can be reclaimed.

Indigenous higher education

Several Indigenous and Intercultural higher education models and programs have sprung up around the world, particularly during the last three decades (e.g. Mato, 2008; Schmelkes, 2009). Not unlike challenges faced by elementary and secondary schools, Indigenous higher education has to navigate neoliberal systems of education and colonizing institutions, and some

efforts have been criticised for falling into (or originating from) that model (e.g. Maldonado-Alvarado, 2016; Walsh, 2010). Yet despite these challenges, many activists, scholars and educators have successfully opened up new spaces for Indigenous knowledges and languages through higher education. A well-known example is the College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo started by Larry Kimura and his students as an important pillar of the Hawaiian language reclamation movement. Learning through the Hawaiian language, students in their first year learn about the movement. They explore possibilities for their own role within the movement in their second year, and in their third and fourth year become actively involved (Brenzinger & Heinrich, 2013). The program provides the flexibility for students to draw on their own strengths and knowledge systems and the space for them to work with the community to see how they can best contribute to the collective movement.

This sense of higher education as an institution that articulates its goals and dreams around the collective well-being is also present in the Pluriversidad Amawtay Wasi in Ecuador. Created in 2004, the Pluriversity was conceived from an Indigenous philosophy and methodology, its mission to "contribute to the formation of human talents that prioritize a harmonious relationship between Mother Nature and the Human Being based on community well-being as the foundation of the construction of the Plurinational State and the Intercultural Society" (Amawtay Wasi, n.d.) Community well-being or "buen-vivir" refers to the concept of Sumak Kawsay which emerges from the collective experience of Indigenous peoples and emphasizes the relationship between Mother Nature and human beings. Offering degrees in agroecology, ancestral architecture and education, the pluriversity approaches education through Indigenous ways of knowing and aims to transform society through Sumak Kawsay, reclaiming native knowledge, technologies and ways of living (Leon, 2008; Sarango, 2008). Students at the

University actively engage in producing culture in the form of multimedia, news reports and entertainment that highlight Indigenous culture through Indigenous languages such as Quichua and Shuar.

In Oaxaca, communal education efforts have also extended to higher education and especially teacher education to train teachers who are committed to the communal philosophy of education and to developing proficiency in their original languages. The ENBIO (Escuela Normal Bilingüe Intercultural de Oaxaca) is perhaps the best known teacher training institution rooted in comunalidad and intercultural education, its aim, to contribute to "the revitalization, valuing, empowerment, and strengthening of the world view, communal knowledge, customs, traditions, festivals and cultural logic of Indigenous communities" (Reyes, 2007, p.4 in Meyer, 2018, p.393). Students at ENBIO are trained to be teachers in Indigenous communities where the language is still being transmitted to young children, and are thus required to be speakers of an original language and have deep knowledge of their culture. As part of the program, they spend one year in their communities during which time they collaborate with them to propose a project, transforming community knowledges into a teaching approach that encompasses different themes and subjects. All of this in the Indigenous or original language (Reyes & Vázquez, 2008).

Takeaways

The examples laid out above are illustrations of Indigenous education efforts that aim to reclaim languages and cultures through Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world. There are many challenges that these programs and movements have faced and continue to face in these homogenizing times (McCarty, 2003), and we're not oblivious to the fact that they operate within the same systems of education and governmental institutions that have oppressed

them, yet the purpose here is to highlight the transformations through the spaces they carve out every day for Indigenous languages and the constant re-making of culture. So, to return to our research questions, how are Indigenous knowledge systems being articulated within language reclamation movements and what can Language Attitude learn from these initiatives?

The initiatives described here come from different parts of the world and different levels of education, from early childhood to higher education. Each has sprung up from a different sociopolitical and sociolinguistic context and from the particular needs of the community that spearheaded the effort. There are however some interrelated themes that point to important takeaways. We are reminded by these experiences that language cannot be isolated and that language reclamation is never only about the language. Language, culture and knowledge-making are intertwined processes that encompass land, spirituality, relationality, and a collective responsibility that emerges from the roots up.

Language nests like the Kōhanga Reo and the Pūnana Leo emphasize spiritual values and spiritual interactions within their educational philosophies. Similarly, the philosophy and praxis of Sumak Kawsay at the Pluriversidad Amawtay Wasi--prioritizing a harmonious relationship between Mother Nature and the Human Being--, of aloha'āina at HKM immersion in Hawaii --encompassing the relationship to the land and all beings as part of interrelated systems-- and at the BICAP, the Ayuujk concept and praxis of wejën kajën --the sprouting, awakening of person-people to create within what is given by the natural world--, all entail spiritual relationships with the land and all beings, human and non-human. It is these ways of knowing and being in the world that frame the reclamation efforts.

Just like knowledge and spirituality cannot be separated, knowledge arises by being enveloped by land and cannot be separated from the land (Simpson, 2002). Being enveloped by

land at HKM means conceiving of literacies as land-centered, learning to read the stars and the winds, finding meaning in the responses of birds or stones and writing ourselves into the landscape. It means engaging with the land as territory, cultivating taro in a school garden at HKM, collecting sap in the spring at Waadookodaading, learning traditional skills in trapping, cooking, and fur tanning at the Cree Way school, or visiting Waikato-tainui sacred places at Rakaumanga. The connection to the land is also enacted through an education that is rooted in the community and participates in the yearly activities, events and ceremonies. Even when education happens within a school building, it blurs the lines between school and community, taking the students out or bringing elders into the classroom. Land-based education is enacted through storytelling, and learning the histories of our ancestors.

The web of relationality that connects humans with the natural world extends to the social world, connecting each other in a web of support and collective responsibility. The communities around which each of these efforts are created include children, teachers, extended families, elders, and others who participate and work together in the work of language and culture reclamation. This requires the work of everyone in the community. It is necessarily intergenerational and it is everyone's responsibility.

Going back to Bog and Language Attitude, what can we learn from the work of these communities? What are the possibilities for this game in the context of language and culture reclamation? Veronica describes her journey of language reclamation as a spiritual journey towards finding her inner power and learning to express Mbòg. Re-learning a language and different ways of knowing entails learning to be and express Mbòg, Sumak Kawsay, aloha'āina or wejën kajën in different ways, re-creating spiritual relationships with the land and all beings around us through a creative journey. For each individual and community the journey is unique,

but they are connected through a web of familial relationships and new relationships formed through the language reclamation journey.

As we've learned from other journeys, language reclamation needs to be engaged through local practices, uncovering and re-creating local knowledges. *Bòg*can be played in any setting and with any group of people, and each time, the interactions, the relationships formed, the journey through the game will be different. The knowledge gained arises from that specific context, the group of people coming together around a table or a fireplace. It gives shape to a situated pedagogy that is necessarily land-based through storytelling as participants tell stories about themselves, their ancestors and the land.

Intergenerational interactions happen during the game when played within families or in communities with young people and elders, presenting opportunities for all to learn from each other. Yet even when played among youth or adults, each individual brings with them their stories and with them, their ancestors, their inherited ancestral knowledge. It opens up possibilities and spaces for youth to re-create culture and to find their inner power. As in the Bàsàa language reclamation summer camp, the game can fill youth with questions about their roots, prompting them to go back home and engage their parents and their grandparents in telling stories, in speaking and teaching their language. Within those families where the ancestral language is no longer spoken, or those families where perhaps there is little remembered, new connections and relationships may be sought and formed to the land, to their ancestors and to the people who inhabited the land before we did. Indeed, most Indigenous education and language and culture reclamation efforts are open to anyone who is interested in joining the movement, emphasizing the need for society at large to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing (e.g. the Pluriversidad Amawtay Wasi and HKM immersion shcools). Similarly, Goodyear-Ka'ōpua

(2013) and Martinez Luna (2010) explain that Indigenous ways of living (aloha'āina and comunalidad respectively), are practices that anyone can learn and participate in.

Theory and praxis are intertwined in language and culture reclamation. Playing *Bòg!*, engaging in storytelling and weaving new relationships generates knowledge and re-creates culture. *Bòg*is only the medium for what we believe can grow into a long spiritual journeys of language and culture reclamation. Above all, there must be a collective responsibility to continue and to grow these individual and collective journeys, a responsibility to pass on the language and pass on the knowledge. As Quillien (2018) notes, if you don't share it, you are disturbing the social order. So with that in mind, let's start *Bògging*. Let's start fixing what has been disturbed.

Next steps

Reflecting on how we are articulating Indigenous knowledges though *Bòg*and how we are contributing towards or facilitating language reclamation efforts should be an ongoing process. What knowledges are we re-creating? How are we creating culture, and where are we taking these creations? Each time the game is played new knowledge and new questions will emerge. The needs of each group and each community will also shift.

Engaging in conversations after playing the game about the experience and what journeys it may enable are important to move this work forward. This will keep the work rooted in community despite traveling to many different places and contexts.

It was after one such conversation at Indigenous Roots Cultural Center with the youth from the International Indigenous Youth Council that the idea emerged of making the game more interactive and take it to high schools, middle schools and elementary schools.

The idea is to pass around a thread from person to person as they interact or take turns to tell their stories. The web that emerges from each game will be unique and reflecting that particular experience and interaction, a reference to the spider a symbol of protection and a reflection of the web of relationships formed during *Bòg*These webs could be hanged on the wall as an art piece with an artists' statement that reflects the unique and distinct experience(s) playing the game and/or the beginning of a/multiple journey(s).

The next steps for Language Attitude involve planning a process to develop this interactive part of the game in partnership with the youth from the International Indigenous Youth Council. Language Attitude is also looking for ways to support the youth's work, through finding funding opportunities and new partnerships with the goal of bringing this work to schools and other organizations in Minnesota that work with linguistically diverse youth to reclaim their culture and native languages.

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Appendix - Bòg Booklet English

Bòg
A game where people
talk about themself!

What is a spider
A spider is an eight-legged arthropod who builds a web in any given environment. We can see its web in human made environments such as ceiling corners in houses. In natural environments, when we encounter a spider web, we sometimes panic to quickly remove its sticky silk. Spiders are everywhere around us.

Symbol of the spider
Oral tradition recounts that the Bàsàa people of Cameroon originated from the town of Meroe in ancient Egypt. In the 11th and 12th centuries, they migrated from the East to escape conflict, and found refuge in current day Cameroon, in what is now Ngog Lituba, the pierced rock.

Ngog Lituba is where Mban, the ancestor of the Bàsàa people of Cameroon, and his family hid from invaders. After they entered the rock, a spider wove a nest that sealed the hole and protected them. When the invaders arrived at Ngog Lituba, they were no longer able to track the family. That is how Mban and his family escaped the invaders.

As a result, the spider is a symbol of protection for the Bàsàa people of Cameroon and Ngog Lituba is a sacred site.

Historical, social and political context
At that time, Mban and his family transmitted language and culture orally for many generations until 1742, when the loss of language and culture began in Cameroon. This year was the initial contact with the Portuguese. The loss was perpetuated with the Germans in 1884; and the French and British who took over after Germany lost World War I ("Rio dos Camaroes" from the Portuguese became "der Kamerun" to the Germans, "Cameroon" to the British and "Cameroun" to the French).

While Cameroonian independence was granted in 1960, the 488 years of enduring physical and mental abuse through education and religion desecrated the country's linguistic, cultural and biological diversity, and this desecration continues to this day through assimilation. In Cameroon, for the linguistic, cultural and biological diversity to thrive, the language has to serve a meaningful function in culturally important domains.

Philosophy
As an American-born Cameroonian and a Bàsàa, our great-grandparents, grandparents and parents had to adapt because our ways were disturbed. Bòg, in the Bàsàa language of the People of Cameroon, means to fix what has been disturbed to maintain social order.

I developed the game Bòg to keep my ancestors' language and culture alive. Though many of the game's elements are rooted in Bàsàa culture, it is designed to be a tool for anyone to use to explore and talk about their ancestors' culture together.

It may feel like learning a new language: you make a fool of yourself, it’s awkward, and with practice it gets easier. Just give it a go and try to have LOTS of fun. Bòg is a game of love and pride. It’s showing your feelings about your culture and language. Talk about your memories. Make new memories. Have fun. Share your culture. Speak your language. Don’t stop bògging!

Instructions
If you want to win, make sure you support everyone. Winning is simply helping!

Bòg has flexible rules. They are very flexible because people make up their own rules anyways! Just talk about yourself—your childhood, tradition, stereotypes, food, people, places.

Simply put, it is about where you come from, how you grew up, the funny things about language and more.

What you need
To play, you need the deck of Bòg cards, and paper and markers for drawing and making notes.

Number of players
Nine (9) players can Bòg at a time. Boo anlèl bé likañ is a Bàsàa proverb that means there is no counting beyond 9.

The cards
5 Reflection cards (orange) for you to share what’s up with you and what you're thinking

5 Action cards (purple) for you to share in a particular way

17 Culture cards (green) for you to share about part of your culture

How to play
To begin, lay the drawing and note paper on the playing surface. Make sure the markers are around and available to everyone. Write the information shared in the group or draw what you feel in conversation with the group. Don’t forget to sign your name.

To play, lay the cards in the middle. To start, the youngest player picks a card and the older players help as needed.

Remember, be proud and share the love.

Play order
The youngest player starts and decides on the play order from there.

Add a level of difficulty Divide the deck in three stacks: purple, orange and green. To play, pick one card of each color. Share about your culture by integrating all three cards.

For example, you pick About Me, Tradition and Sing It. One possible play is: you talk about your traditional self by singing. Another possible play is singing about a tradition and explaining how it relates to you.

The bottom line: you can choose to combine the cards in any way you see fit.

When you are done with your turn, put the cards at the bottom of the stack.

How you know it's working

Everyone is sharing the love by offering a story, asking a question, and helping others be proud, too! To win, build a spider web. To build a strong spider web: help people when they have difficulty to think of something. Share the love: offer to help out with the reflection card!

Sometimes helping is just telling a joke to lighten the mood and allow the player to relax. Sometimes, helping is dancing for someone. Other times it is telling a story related to the card to get everyone going.